

### Refugee crisis in Europe: the case studies of Sweden and Slovakia

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Abstracting

## REFUGEE CRISIS IN EUROPE: THE CASE STUDIES OF SWEDEN AND SLOVAKIA

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### *Abstract*

*Europe as a continent has throughout its history been one of the most popular destinations for migrants and foreigners who have viewed the Old continent as a place of better social and economic possibilities. However, recently most European states and its publics have not been so willing to accept the refugees fleeing the wars and violence. For instance, there have been only a few countries such as Sweden and Germany which have openly welcomed the migrants over the past years. On the other hand, some EU states such as Slovakia have openly rejected to accept the refugees just because they do not want the Brussels to impose immigration policies on them or because they simply do not want Muslims or non-Europeans in their communities. The migrant crisis has thus become a real litmus test for the EU coherence and unity. Thus, in this paper I study the cases of Sweden and Slovakia in terms of their immigration policies since they have applied completely different responses towards the migrants. Through this comparative study I hope that it will be much clearer whether the last migrant crisis can be an end to a united Europe in a global world or is this just one of the several crises the EU has faced throughout its history. Probably the biggest problem in this sense is that only a few EU states have proved their democratic and humanistic matureness to accommodate the migrants and accept them as equal citizens.*

*Key words: EU; migrant crisis; refugees; unity; solidarity*

## INTRODUCTION

Although over previous few years the migration has been viewed by most countries in Europe as a burden, the truth is that it represents both an opportunity and a challenge. While well-managed migration may contribute to multicultural exchange and economic progress in destination countries, its mismanagement may put threaten social cohesion, democracy and security as well. However, the biggest problem is when the county does not have a will and readiness to make efforts to help those people fleeing wars and violence.

The recent migrant crisis in Europe openly has proven that the Member States of the European Union (EU) are not yet completely prepared to move beyond their particularistic and national interests in order to help those vulnerable people. Better to say, a solid legal foundation for harmonized immigration and asylum policies was sorely lacking, as the EU Member States had insisted on preserving much of their autonomy in this area (Lehne 2016). The migrant crisis has indeed to a large extent demonstrated all shortcomings and pitfalls of the supranational community European states have tried to build throughout last seven decades. Immigration is indeed a prominent economic, legal, social and political issue all across Europe as well as in most of the developed and industrialised world since it can affect different aspect of social and political life.

For most European countries, large scale immigration is a more recent phenomenon than for countries such as Australia, the US, or Canada. This time Europe is facing the largest migration of people since World War II. Also, immigration to Europe is very heterogeneous since different European countries have immigrant populations that are very different in terms of ethnicity, origin, and educational attainment. That's why they have implemented diverse set of policies in order to approach the migrant question and subsequently to integrate those people into new societies. Recently nothing so manifestly can portray a real face of Europe as the migrant crisis has done. As Lehne claims, this was also reflected in Germany, where western Germany's initial Willkommenskultur, or welcoming culture, clashed with a sceptical attitude in the regions of former East Germany (2016).

Since the very beginning of 2014, approximately 800,000 people have arrived at European Union borders through irregular channels, fleeing conflict and violence at home or in search of better life opportunities. Although the European continent has been attractive to foreigners and especially to foreign workers over the last decades, this last migration surge is becoming the largest and most challenging that Europe has faced since the Second World War. The European politicians at some point have understood that the migrant problem can only be solved through joint action and transnational policies. Thus, the EU states have tried to agree on common refugee protection regime in order to harmoniously meet the challenge. The European refugee regime has rested on a set of Republican principles that trump the self-interest of the domestic majority (Lavenex and Wagner 2007). The newest European policies have aimed at demonstrating some sort of solidarity towards the migrants and refugees. This post-national straightjacket was sustained after 1989, even in the face of so-called welfare nationalism (Karolewski and Suszycki 2013), by the notion that the EU's economic advantages came with certain duties attached. Some European countries have viewed the migrants as a valuable economic opportunity which can help in economic progress of European societies.

However, to what extent and has such an approach succeeded in practice? The recent migrant crisis has showed that vast majority of the EU states primarily focus on economic and political interests rather than on solidarity and united approach to the international affairs. What's more, several Member States have officially rejected common EU response regarding the acceptance of the migrants fleeing to Europe from the war-torn regions such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Indeed, the EU's joint effort to become a "migration state", one able to embrace cross-border labour and migrants has become tough and strenuous (Hollifield 2004). The biggest problem in the EU is that some countries support the idea of united response of the Union only in order to achieve their national

interests undermining their supranational commitments. Only a few of them have showed sincere commitment to supranational causes and an idea of solidarity with others.

That is why it is of fundamental importance to especially study such rare cases which manifest humanistic approach to resolving global problems. Such immigration policies of the EU Member States surely have demonstrated serious lack of solidarity and united approach to this complex issue. That's why it is of crucial importance to explore the very issue of immigration policies of the EU Member States to comprehend to what extent they are indeed ready or not to welcome the people seeking shelter and help. By analysing the EU policies with regards to migrants it can be easier to understand to what extent not only European but also the societies and countries in other parts of the world are likely to welcome those "strangers" into their communities. The migrant crisis has become a real litmus test for the EU coherence and unity. Also, this is the biggest test for a vision of a borderless Europe and for an idea of a free movement guaranteed under the EU's 30-year-old Schengen Agreement. No doubt that some EU Member States are simply left alone to solve the problems related to migrants. For instance, when pushing for solidarity and homogeneous response from other members, Italy has been ready to resort to brinksmanship, like in the wake of the Arab Spring when it allowed refugees and migrants to move north or more recently with its threats to draw down its own search and rescue exercises in the Mediterranean if no help was forthcoming (Traynor and Hooper, 2011). The case of Italy has become one of the most visible examples of disunited response of European states to the migrant crisis. In the face of a massive inflow of refugees, the EU's Dublin Regulation, which assigns the responsibility for registering and processing asylum applications to the first Schengen country in which refugees arrive, proved unfair and ultimately unsustainable (Lehne 2016).

On the other hand, there have been a few countries such as Sweden and Germany which have welcomed the most of the refugees and migrants coming to Europe over the past two years. They in real terms have showed that cultural and religious diversity can mean richness and not a reason for concern or tensions. What then does such diverse responses in the EU actually show us when it comes to the immigration policies in the EU and why such differences among the Member States exist? Does it mean that there is a need for applying a new integration concept in the Union? Could recent reasoning of the EU Member States regarding the migrant question gradually destroy the very idea of European unification? What does the responses to migrant crisis say about the EU?

In this article we examine the cases of Sweden and Slovakia in terms of their immigration policies since they have applied completely different responses towards the migrants and refugees. When it comes to the immigration policies of its Member States can we talk about the concept of avant-garde Europe? Therefore, in the article we extensively discuss key policy issues in the European context, focusing on the access to citizenship, asylum seeking, border enforcement, amnesties and policies to attract talent but also other vulnerable groups. It is not always easy to understand why the countries reject the migrants when they can be of concrete use and advantage to their communities. As Brzezinski claims, migration is based on a country's 'absolute advantage', with high-wage states holding the advantage, and sending countries gaining from the political incorporation of their nationals there (Brzezinski 1997). They actually bring skills, entrepreneurial expertise and capacities that may help address the labour market and income gaps that many EU states face as their populations age and birth rates decline (Bodewig 2015). However, the

biggest problem in this sense is that only a few EU states have proved their democratic and humanistic maturity to accommodate the migrants and accept them as equals.

Has the migrant crisis become a crisis of the more united EU? Will the future of the EU be built on the scheme of core or avant-garde Europe? The research results will hopefully show that EU states such as Slovakia have openly rejected to accept the refugees just because they do not want the Brussels to impose immigration policies on them or because they simply do not want Muslims or non-Europeans in their community. If the second one proves true then the study could prove that actually the EU as a supranational community has completely failed as it could not transform its Member States to become more democratic, inclusive and open communities. In other words, the migrant crisis is all about the very nature of the EU and its identity and future ambitions.

Also, the influence of the nationalistic or far right parties at the power on the migrant issue should never be neglected. Thus, the implicit point of comparison is of course to European countries with their apparently fixed national identities. That is, the EU states have unwittingly played along. They have, for instance, ignored their own citizens' history of mobility despite the fact that the emigration of their populations was the logical corollary to the settler states' emergence (Favell 2009, 168). At the first place the mere concept of the "migrant crisis" has demonstrated the nature of the problem of the EU. As Merritt argues:

The "migrant crisis" has revealed a topsy-turvy world of prejudices, cope with the flow of conflict refugees and others who are simply seeking a better life is shaming, yet at its root is a European mindset that sees immigration as a danger instead of welcoming it as an opportunity (2015, 1).

The worst thing is that in several EU states there have been obvious xenophobic tendencies against the people who are coming from other communities. It is not only about migrants and refugees but also the hatred is directed towards the mobile EU citizens. That is, even mobile EU citizens are now treated like workers from outside the bloc, and face hostility and protectionism (Ghimis *et al.* 2014). Are the differences between the South and North of the EU too persistent as well? As Angenendt and Parkes argue, Southerners stand accused of squandering northerners' financial and operational resources with their lax policies, northerners of demanding that southerners implement northern-style policies without sufficient respect for local circumstances (Angenendt and Parkes 2010). Or, is it all about "the West" vs. "the Rest" as Samuel Huntington puts it (Huntington 1993). Has the Eurocentric paradigm been so persistent among the European for so long?

Even before the current situation, EU states could not completely agree on the mechanisms to manage large-scale international migration which some of them have viewed as a threat to the sovereignty of their national and regional borders and to European identity, whatever it means. Most Member States have reacted accordingly, tightening controls on irregular access to their territories and, in some cases, on legal channels (Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2015). As a result, such measures massively increased restrictions but still have not been effective in preventing the influx of refugees and other migrants. They simply have tried to find any available means to reach Europe exposing themselves to serious physical risks. That's why it is necessary to examine the statements and words of politicians in the EU states in order to understand how they affected the very social approaches to the migrants. And this very examination can be done through discourse analysis.

## DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In this article the discourse analysis is used a tool to interpret and study the correlation of migrant crisis and the core premises of a nature of the EU. The aim of discourse analysis is to show the ontological and epistemological premises which are embedded in language, and which allows a statement to be understood as rational or interpreted as a meaningful and usable unit. Discourse analysis investigates whether – in statements or texts - it is possible to establish any regularity in the objects which are discussed; the subjects designated as actors; the causal relations claimed to exist between objects (*explanans*) and subjects (*explanandum*); but also the expected outcome of subjects trying to influence objects; the goal of their action; and finally the time dimension by which these relations are framed (Pedersen 2009). Also, discourse analysis is the study of rationality and how it is expressed in a particular historical context, in this case the EU. Discourse analysis is part of the constructivist or social constructivist approach within the social sciences. It assumes that basic assumptions with regard to being, self and the world are constructed by individuals living in a historical and cultural context which is to a large extent produced and reproduced by their speech acts. Discourse is thus “an institutionalized way of talking that regulates and reinforces action and thereby exerts power” (Wodak and Meyer 2009).

Also, the study of language cannot promote the exhaustive picture of how are the migration policies formed and applied, but it can surely enrich the classical institutional analysis in political science and contribute to the more extensive understanding of social and political problems. Discourse analysis is thus based on the assumption that “to talk” means “to act” and words (discourses) have a strong performative effect on social reality (Austin 1975). In this study, I use Buonfino’s conceptualization of securitization of migration discourses. Buonfino argues that “immigration as a threat and a security concern has become the hegemonic discourse type in government policy” (2004, 24). Thus, issues of solidarity, ethics and human rights become less important than a mere idea of security.

Buonfino argues also that “the nature of the immigration debate has become even more politicized at the European Union level as it reflects and magnifies the problems and concerns that nation states have already internally confronted” (2004, 24). One of the main reasons for this are disunited approaches in terms of intergovernmental dialogue and cooperation that should be the basis of EU migration policy because that would be probably the dream of its founding fathers. Lahav argues that migration policy of the EU is based on intergovernmental approach and on the principle of the “lowest common denominator” (2004), which means that only those measures are put into practice on which all of the strong nation states can agree. And that is not the paradigm of solidarity which has been one of the stepping stones of European democracy and humanism. It is good that Europe still has countries such as Sweden, Germany and Denmark which have in comparison with other EU states wholeheartedly welcomed the migrants and refugees.

## **SWEDEN'S RESPONSE TO MIGRANTS**

Sweden has been one of the European countries which have openly welcomed refugees treating them as its own citizens whose human rights have to be respected. Sweden has demonstrated that democracy goes beyond national borders. Most Swedish citizens openly supported the entry of migrants, although there have been few incidents regarding the refugees. Also, most of the politicians and the media in the Nordic country have welcomed the refugees. As the study done by Berry, Garcia-Blanco and Moore has showed, the Swedish press was the most positive towards refugees and migrants, while coverage in the United Kingdom was the most negative, and the most polarised. Amongst those countries surveyed, Britain's right-wing media was uniquely aggressively in its campaigns against refugees and migrants (2015).

Also, in Germany and Sweden, there was extensive criticism over the unwillingness of other EU members to share the burden of refugee challenge. In Sweden, many newspapers went so far as to directly blame the EU for the deaths of migrants in the Mediterranean (Berry, Garcia-Blanco and Moore 2015). While in some European countries far-right parties completely opposed refugee settlement, in Sweden, an electoral success of the Social Democrats opened the way for democratic treatment of refugees and migrants. It can also be seen how a strong political tradition, such as social democracy in Sweden, impacts the country's response to migrant crisis.

Swedish authorities have over the last four or five decades implemented extensive measures in order to make an integration of migrants smoother. In other words, the Swedish state enacted integration measures more than 30 years before officially proclaiming to shift from immigration to integration policies (Wiesbrock 2011). Thus, in 1965 the first courses in Swedish for immigrants were opened (Dingu-Kyrklund 2007, 6). In 1996, the Swedish authorities officially announced the transition from immigration to an integration policy. Also, on the basis of the government bill "Sweden, the future and diversity – from immigration politics to integration politics" (Sverige, framtiden och mångfalden - från invandrarpolitik till integrationspolitik), a new integration policy was agreed in the Riksdag in 1997 (Wiesbrock 2011).

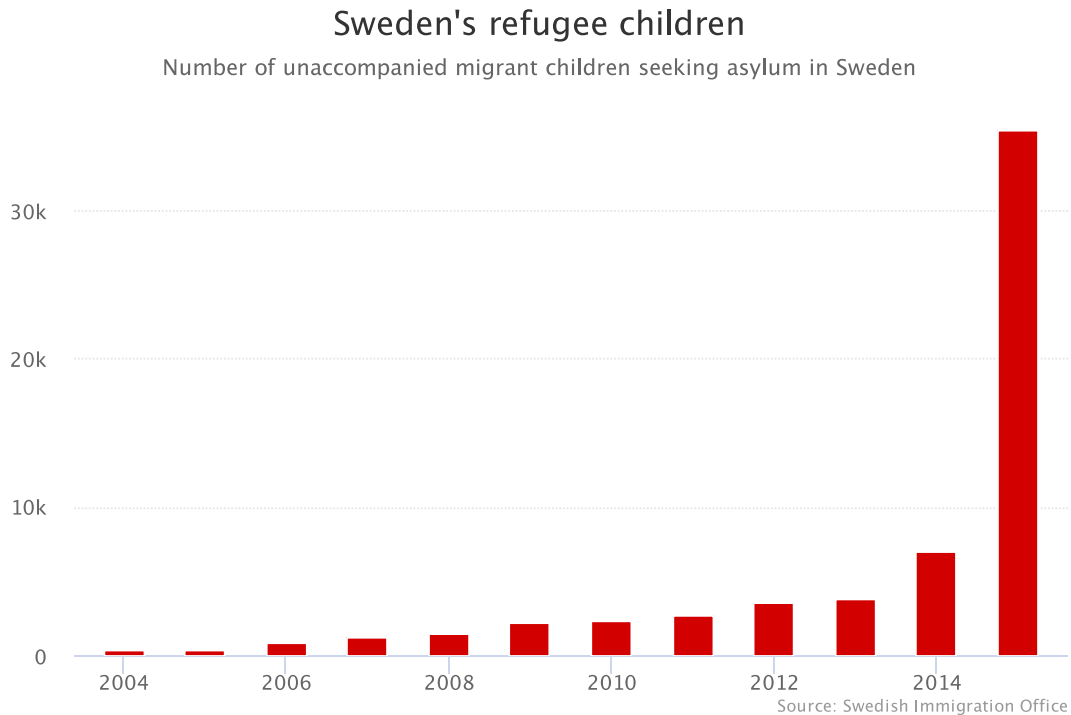
The central objectives of the new integration policy were equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for everyone, irrespective of their ethnic and cultural background, social cohesion built on diversity and social development characterised by mutual respect in democratic society. The new policy openly emphasised the existence of rights, duties and opportunities of all members of Swedish society and the importance to combat racism and ethnic discrimination (Wiesbrock 2011). The main objective of the new changes in national legislation was to make smoother and more harmonious the introduction of newly arrived immigrants into working and social life in a new country. The migrants have been now more encouraged to become actively employed. However, as said before, the central Swedish integration model has been based on the principles of equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, regardless of their ethnic, religious or cultural background (Regeringskansliet 2009, 1). The influx of asylum seekers and refugees to Sweden and other Nordic countries has varied so far depending on the scope of conflicts in other parts of world. Since 2000, fewer asylum seekers have arrived in Denmark and Finland than in Norway, while Sweden stands out with far greater numbers of asylum seekers, also in relation to its population (Djuve 2016).

Over the past four years, Sweden particularly has experienced a significantly higher number of asylum Seekers and migrants. For instance, in 2015 more than 160.000 asylum seekers arrived in Sweden, which is equivalent to twice the number that arrived in the previous peak year of 2014 (Djuve 2016). The other Nordic countries have also experienced dramatic increases in the number of asylum seekers and migrants from 2014 to 2015. Sweden has often openly criticized other European countries because of their selfish stance towards the migrants. For instance, Stefan Löfven, Sweden's prime minister, said very harsh words to some central and eastern European governments for what he termed a selfish approach to the EU's refugee and migrant crisis, saying their attitude was completely unacceptable and incompatible with humane European values (Financial Times, 2015). In an interview with the Financial Times, Löfven said: "I can understand it if you say this crisis is a worry. But to say: 'This isn't my problem, we can't accept Muslims' — no, I don't think this is part of our European values, and I can't understand this kind of attitude." (Financial Times 2015). The Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia have openly said that they are against accepting refugees under a voluntary relocation programme that was backed by a majority of the EU's 28 Member States. Some politicians in these countries have argued that they do not want to accept migrants, specifically Muslim refugees from war-torn regions. However, Löfven, a Social Democrat who leads a minority coalition government, stated that the EU needs to address this crisis together since, in his opinion, just a few countries in Europe can't do it on their own (Financial Times 2015).

Sweden has been especially successful in settling unaccompanied children, what has perhaps been one of the hardest problems facing many European countries since this problem requires more attention than other sort of refugees. Unaccompanied children have indeed become one of the toughest challenges for the European governments. It is very sad that many countries have openly rejected to accept even this category of migrants although children should be treated in a humane and democratic way in every society, especially in Europe which is for many the cradle of democracy and multiculturalism. For years, Sweden has been tremendously successful in integrating young migrants. For instance, as Nelson puts it: "in 2004, it was absorbing about 400 children a year. Five years ago, this had grown to 2,600 — and even then, the system was starting to creak. But this was as nothing, compared to what was to come. Last year, 35,000 unaccompanied children claimed asylum in Sweden — most of who had arrived in the last four months of 2015" (The Telegraph 2016).



**Table 1: Sweden's refugee children (The Telegraph, 2016)**



Furthermore, Sweden has often viewed the migrants coming to this country as a valuable economic asset which can contribute to its economic progress. For instance, the country's employment agency (Arbetsförmedlingen) in December 2016 stated that Sweden requires 64,000 immigrants annually if it wants to prevent labour shortages from hampering economic growth. The agency's director general Mikael Sjöberg argued that a labour shortage will start to hurt Sweden's growth as early as 2017, before becoming an increasing problem thereafter, as employers in the private and public sector struggle to find people with the right skills and qualifications (The Local 2016). As Sweden has been facing decreasing trend of local-born population, in Arbetsförmedlingen they believe that immigration can to a large extent solve the labour shortage. As Johan Bissman from Arbetsförmedlingen argues: "Sweden's birth rate is simply too low. The home-born population is reducing. To continue having the possibility of growing further, labour is needed, and therefore an increased population," (The Local 2016). Thus, Swedish officials see the immigration as a long-term solution for the country's economy.

### SLOVAKIA'S IMMIGRATION POLICIES

Slovakia's experience with integration of migrants is not so long, but since there is a significant number of Roma and Hungarians in the country, integration as a concept has been an issue in Slovakia for decades (Lajčáková 2007). Slovakia has surely been one of the EU states that has been most critical to the idea of refugee settlement in Europe. Slovakia has from the very beginning rejected the EU policy of migrant relocation. What's more, Slovak government took the EU to court to fight a mandatory mechanism for

relocating asylum-seekers. That is, in December 2015 Slovakia filed a lawsuit at the European Court of Justice against the European Union's plan to redistribute 120,000 refugees across all 28 EU Member States. Thus, it can be said that Slovakia openly has rejected the EU humane call for more solidarity with migrants.

Also, anti-Muslim rhetoric of its prime minister, Robert Fico, is known to almost everyone since he several times said that Muslims cannot integrate into a European culture. He warned that refugees will be equally impossible to integrate as Slovakia's Roma population and that Muslims will change the character of their Christian community. Slovakia's Prime Minister has argued that "Islam has no place" in the country just weeks before it took over the presidency of the EU (Independent 2016). Speaking about migration, he told Slovakian news agency TASR: "When I say something now, maybe it will seem strange, but I'm sorry, Islam has no place in Slovakia. I think it is the duty of politicians to talk about these things very clearly and openly. I do not wish there were tens of thousands of Muslims." (Independent 2016). Slovakia officials have said their country will only accept Christians when it takes in Syrian refugees under a EU relocation scheme under which the country was supposed to receive 200 people from camps in Turkey, Italy and Greece under the EU plan to resettle new arrivals. Although the UN's refugee agency (UNHCR) called on countries to take an "inclusive approach" to relocation, the Interior ministry of Slovakia spokesman Ivan Netik said Muslims would not be accepted because they would not feel at home (BBC 2015).

What's more, the predominantly Christian country of Slovakia passed a law in November 2016 that effectively bans Islam as an officially recognized religion, which also blocks Islam from receiving any state subsidies for its schools (CNS News, 2016). Before the controversial law was passed, Slovak National Party Chairman Andrej Danko said, "Islamization starts with a kebab and it's already under way in Bratislava -- let's realize what we can face in 5 to 10 years." (CNS News 2016), adding that Slovak state must do everything so that no mosque is built in the future in that country. According to the new law, a religion must have at least 50,000 members to qualify for state recognition; the previous threshold was 20,000 members. According to Slovakia's latest census, there are 2,000 Muslims and there are "no recognized mosques". Slovakia's population is approximately 5.4 million. As for religion, according to the Slovak Statistical Office, 62.2% of Slovaks are Catholic, 9% Protestant, 3.8% Greek Catholic, 1% Orthodox, and 13.4% atheist. Fico led the campaign for the March election under the slogan "We protect Slovakia", calling migrants "a danger". However, an unintended result of Fico's harsh and undemocratic rhetoric towards the migrants was that the far-right People's Party-Our Slovakia has entered parliament with over 8% of the vote. It is also paradoxical that even the many young people in Slovakia have been against the idea of accepting the migrants to Slovak society. Thus, in Bratislava, the most cosmopolitan among Slovakia's cities, thousands of mostly young people marched through the city last June, chanting "Slovakia for Slovaks" (Galanova 2016). The protests come as a surprise since the country has accepted only a few of the migrants currently fleeing to European continent.

During the 23 years since its independence, only about 58,000 people have sought asylum in Slovakia and a little over 800 have been successful (Galanova 2016). Less than 700 others have received subsidiary protection which means a status for people who do not qualify as refugees. Still, many Slovaks argue that refugees and migrants are one of the most serious challenges for this Eastern Europe country.

For instance, 39.7 percent of Slovaks polled by Polis Slovakia last year considered refugees to be the biggest problem facing the country (Galanova 2016). In another opinion poll, by Focus last December, 70 percent of Slovak citizens said they were worried about migration while most thought refugees and migrants would increase crime and the risk of terrorist attacks. Also, many Slovaks said that their country was poor that could not afford to share its income and jobs with foreigners (Galanova 2016). It is obvious that most of Slovaks who oppose settlement of migrants in their country have such a stance due to security and economic concerns. However, their fears due to cultural and ideological concerns should not be neglected as well.

There even have been several cases when whole villages or neighbourhoods decided to reject the settlement of migrants. For instance, in August 2015 the residents of the Slovakian village of Gabčíkovo voted in a referendum to reject the establishment of a temporary asylum camp to house 500 migrants bound for Austria under an agreement between Bratislava and Vienna (The Local 2015). About 97 percent of voters said yes to the question “Are you against the establishment of a temporary migrant camp in the building of the Slovak Technical University?”. According to Teodor Bodo, the head of the referendum's electoral commission, 2,600 of Gabčíkovo's 4,300 adult residents participated in the vote, while only 102 were in favour of hosting migrants. Local authorities decided to organise the referendum on this question following a petition signed by 3,150 residents of Gabčíkovo. Although the interior ministry warned that the results were not binding in other parts of the country, the mere case manifests general atmosphere following the migrant flows to Europe over the last years. Slovakia has agreed to house 500 migrants who have applied for asylum in Austria, at the end of a bilateral agreement concluded on July 21st in Vienna and designed to reduce pressure on the neighbouring country's capabilities for receiving migrants (The Local 2015).

Many people in Slovakia have viewed migrants as a serious threat to their national and cultural values. Thus, by equating the citizens of a state to specific ethnic group, the state sends the message to other ethnic groups, although indirectly, that they are in an inferior and unequal position. Also, Chudžíková believes that political discourse in Slovakia plays an important role in the response to integration of minority groups. Her research has shown that in Slovakia any requirements of the minorities are understood as a threat for the majority as a nation (Chudžíková 2011, 12).

## **EUROPE (UN)DIVIDED ON THE MIGRANT QUESTION**

The arrival of refugees is not a new social and political phenomenon in Europe since the continent has been the magnet for millions of migrants over the last decades. Europe has been a widely attractive place to the migrants due to its extensive economic opportunities and multiculturalism. Thus, the most recent Syrian refugee crisis has been just one among several crises that have occurred in Europe throughout its history. Other significant massive population displacements took place in Lebanon during the civil war of 1975-1990; in the Balkans - Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo - during most of the 1990s; in Algeria in the 1990s; in Iraq during three decades from the early 1980s to the late 2000s; and in Libya in spring and summer 2011 (Fargues and Fandrich 2012). It would be wrong to say that European states have not known how to integrate those people into their market and social life.

The biggest difference between these refugee waves is that those people could reach Europe and were more or less welcomed until the end of the 1990s under a variety of statuses, while many refugees fleeing conflicts in the 2000s were rejected at the European borders. Although Europe is often cited as an ideal example of a multicultural community consisting of diverse nations, religions, civilisations and cultures, recently many European countries and its citizens openly have proven that they are not democratically mature enough to accept the refugees into their societies. Probably there have been several reasons why that have happened, but no doubt that Europe as a community has become less open and less welcoming over the past years.

Also, the EU states for decades could not agree on common and stable migration policies in order to share the burden of this problem. As a result, the biggest responsibility over the past years has been on the shoulders of the EU members located on its borders, such as Greece, Italy and Bulgaria. It is indeed worrying that the EU's biggest states have not demonstrated necessary commitment and empathy to share the burden with other states facing the biggest problems regarding the migrant flow. According to the EU agreements, entry-point states bear unilateral responsibility for migrants under the Dublin Regulation. Revised in 2013, this EU law stipulates that asylum seekers must remain in the first European country they arrive at and that country is then responsible for considering migrants' asylum applications. Migrants who travel to other EU countries legally face deportation back to the EU country they originally entered. So, was this in any sense share of burden by developed EU members?

Only two years ago, in May 2015, the EU launched a new extensive and, comparing to previous schemes, a quite fair plan for dealing with the migrants and refugees, the so called redistribution scheme, according to which a number of the arriving asylum seekers should be distributed more fairly across the EU states. The plan indeed has been more humane and quite a justifiable idea which has demonstrated Brussels' willingness and readiness to solve the migrant crisis through joint efforts and supranational paradigm. Most importantly, it has indeed been a remarkable sign of solidarity and sincere dialogue between the EU Member States.

However, when it comes to practical implementation, the proposal has so far been met with harsh criticisms from several EU states which stubbornly claim that taking part in the joint plan should be on voluntary basis. Thus, many EU states have not been ready to cooperate for supranational causes which have been one of the fundamental ideas lying behind the existence of the EU project. Also, the European countries has been deeply divided on the question of refugees and migrants due to, although it varies from country to country, serious economic and financial problems, anti-immigration sentiments, xenophobia, islamophobia, right-leaning political parties, fear of terrorism, or simply a declining sense of solidarity and undividedness. Due to their diverse set of policies towards the migrants, it is of crucial importance for the research on Europe or the EU to shed a new light on the research of the countries' stances to a new humanitarian crisis on the continent. Have the EU states mainly preferred security and stability over the human rights, tolerance and humanitarian causes?

No doubt that during the last few decades, the migrant crisis in Europe has been highly politicized and securitized. That's probably one of the biggest reasons why the EU states are deeply divided on the question of migration. The citizens in many EU states are

very suspicious of the migrants, especially after the latest terrorist attacks in France and Germany. As Buonfino argues: “today, the border between security, terrorism, immigration and social fear has become very thin (...)” (Buonfino 2004, 23). Also, it is to some extent related with the social, political and economic integration of minority communities into the European society. Thus, Sasse and Theilemann claim that “migration and minority policy issues are now at the forefront of the political debate in Europe. Both issues denote a dynamic and rapidly changing set of sensitive political, economic and social questions that affect domestic and international policy-making.” (2005). One of the biggest problems regarding the migrant flows has been that a discourse which views migrants as essentialized “others” has grown, and migrants have usually been perceived as objects that can be managed, and essentialized otherness excludes the potentially shared equality (Filadelfiová *et al.* 2010, 114). As a result, the migrants have over last two decades been perceived by many European states mainly as mere objects rather than as valuable subjects which can enrich European social and cultural milieu.

Another challenge which openly has proven a lack of solidarity among the European states has been almost a complete sense of ignorance of the Western European countries towards the countries and societies in Eastern and South-eastern Europe which have been mostly hit by recent migrant crisis. Has indeed the migration crisis brought EU’s East against West? While the Western countries have not been so ready to welcome the migrants at the very beginning, most of the Central European Member States also openly has resisted Brussels’ efforts to spread burden of migrants and refugees. The approach on migrants the Central European Member States have applied is seriously challenging the very Western European ideals of multiculturalism and humanism and also stoking serious debate within the bloc over the meaning of integration, burden sharing and common democratic values (Troianovski and Feher, 2015). The usual response from the politicians in Central Europe and the Baltic has been that migrants and refugees are Western Europe’s problem and that those people cannot be integrated in the European society since they are socially, culturally and religiously quite different.

Although the European Commission in May 2015 suggested that European countries should treat refugees in a humane and democratic manner, most EU states have not manifested necessary willingness to welcome those people. As it is put in the European Agenda for Migration: “Europe should continue to be a safe haven for those fleeing persecution as well as an attractive destination for the talent and entrepreneurship of students, researchers and workers” (European Commission 2015). However, the EU states’ policies to migrant crisis have been mostly inhumane and even brutal in some sense.

That is, Europe’s response to the crisis in terms of opening its doors to refugees has been slow to start and minimal in numbers (McDonald-Gibson 2014). As Lehne argues in his research:


The EU’s current institutional and legislative arrangements were clearly not up to dealing with the huge influx of migrants, and the crisis laid bare deep divisions among the Member States. Depending on the extent to which the EU can overcome these divisions and improve its policies, the refugee crisis could lead to either more Europe, less Europe, or the emergence of a new core of committed Member States (2016).

In particular, there has been serious polarization across the Member States over how many migrants should the European Union accept, and how will the responsibilities be divided among the Member States in regards to providing migrants with access to healthcare, jobs and education (Gashi 2016). Also, the polarization has been particularly felt in the political sphere due to increasing popularity of extreme or Europhobic political parties over the last decades. That is, the polarization in the political sphere can easily be evidenced through the recent triumph of nationalist parties in national and regional elections across Europe. For instance, in France, the far right National Front has promised a stronger stance against migrants and foreigners in a local level, whereas the winning party in Poland's national elections promised not only anti-migration laws, but also a renegotiation with the EU about welfare, nation state supremacy and even EU's stance towards Russian politics in the region (Swidlicki 2015). Thus, the anti-migration views in many EU states have been an indicator of a rise of political tendencies to increase a power of nation states over the political elites in the Brussels. Still, at this atmosphere of fear and uncertainty there have been valuable democratic and humane voices all across Europe who openly supported an idea of welcoming refugees into European societies. Although they have been only few, they have become genuine representatives and supporters of humanism and multiculturalism in Europe. One of the most prominent examples has surely been Pope Francis who has suggested that migrants and refugees should be see the same democratic treatment in European states as any other citizen. Also, Pope Francis has several times advised the European states to welcome the refugees and migrants. For instance, speaking to the Slovak bishops in November 2015, Pope Francis reminded them that the Church is called to welcome immigrants and help "the other". In his opinion, Europe should view the migrants as an opportunity for dialogue and solidarity and not as a threat. As he said: "at times we perceive threats to less populous nations, but at the same time elements that can offer new opportunities. One opportunity, which has become a sign of the times, is the phenomenon of migration, which demands to be understood and confronted with sensitivity and a sense of justice." (CNA 2015). He openly argued for the interethnic solidarity, especially in hard times. Pope Francis argues that the Church is required to proclaim and bear witness to the welcome of the migrants in a spirit of charity and respect for the dignity of those vulnerable people. Last but not least, it is worth recalling the original mind-set of the European movement after World War II, here delivered in early 1948:

We must proclaim the mission and design of a United Europe, whose moral conception will win the respect and gratitude of mankind and whose physical strength will be such that none will dare molest her tranquil sway (...) I hope to see a Europe where men and women of every country will think of being European as of belonging to their native land, and wherever they go in this wide domain will truly feel "here I am at home (Lessambo, 2010).

Thus, if European states wish to become an ideal normative model to others and thus win the respect and gratitude of mankind it should jointly welcome migrants into their society and keep their borders open as it was over the last three decades.

## CONCLUSION

For most European countries, large scale immigration has been a more recent social, political and economic phenomenon in comparison with countries such as Australia, the US, the UK or Canada. Thus, it is of fundamental importance to study the very responses of the EU states to recent migrant crisis. Probably more important than that is the research of the impact of the massive migrant flows on cohesive body of the European society, if something like that exists at all. Still, it is more than certain that EU countries have applied quite diverse policies and mechanisms to handle the migrant crisis. As it is studied in this article, while for instance Sweden has openly welcomed the migrants, countries such as Slovakia, or Hungary, has rejected to accept them. Given quite different responses to the migrant crisis, can it be said that the migrant challenge is an end to a united and integrated Europe? One of the answers to this question would be that the last migrant crisis will probably not result in disintegration of the EU. It will still be remembered as one of few political, social, legal and economic crises the Union has faced throughout its history. However, it is quite disappointing to see that most of the EU states have responded to the issue of arrival of the migrants in rather undemocratic and inhumane way although the bloc in past decades has been praised widely for its normative power and deep commitment to human rights. Even though it is not about the European Union's existential crisis, the migrant crisis openly manifested that EU as a community is not so coherent, harmonious and internally strong as some scholars have argued. The Europeans are now obviously paying the price for the relentlessly blasé attitude. Given that, we can ask ourselves whether the decades-long integration of the EU have not helped the Europeanization and democratisation of its Member States and, if so, why that happened? Is the EU still far away from sincere supranational paradigm? Europe has offered much to its people, but it never really created a melting pot which is probably its biggest problem. 

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